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SUBJECT: CODEL MARKEY VISIT TO BRASILIA

REF: STATE 13602

¶1. SUMMARY. Codel Markey visited Brazil February 15-21. The CODEL began its visit in Manaus where it received briefings on environmental issues focusing on the effects of climate change on the Amazon rainforest. It then proceeded to Rio de Janeiro (reported septel) to focus on alternative fuels, particularly ethanol. February 19-21, the Codel stopped in Brasilia, where it represented the U.S. Congress at the GLOBE Legislators Forum on Climate Change and met with counterparts from the Brazilian Chamber of Deputies. The Codel also met with Minister of the Environment Marina Silva, Ministry of External Relations Under Secretary for Policy (including climate change policy) Everton Vargas, and with representatives of NGOs involved with climate change and the environment. END SUMMARY.

Manaus

¶2. The Codel's visit to Brazil began in Manaus, where members visited the Amazon Research Institute's (INPA) Science Woods research facility and heard briefings on the ecology of the rainforest and the environmental challenges of deforestation. Researchers discussed the potential impacts of global climate change on the rainforest and the difficulties of balancing economic development and preservation of the environment. Codel members also had the opportunity to observe INPA's efforts to preserve threatened and endangered species such as the giant river otter and the fresh water manatee. The Codel then traveled up the river Negro for a first hand view of the rainforest and the riverine wetlands, including observation of caiman lizards and pink river dolphins.

Meeting with the Chairman of Chamber of Deputies

¶3. After arrival in Brasilia, the Codel met with Arlindo Chinaglia, President of the Chamber of Deputies, in his office, as well as at breakfast with several other senators and deputies. Chinaglia underscored his interest in establishing a permanent working group on climate change, deforestation, and biofuels between the Brazilian Congress and the U.S. Congress. He said he had raised this idea with Speaker Nancy Pelosi, whom he met last year, and she seemed receptive. In the short term, he would like to organize a U.S.-Brazil bilateral congressional seminar on biofuels and global warming, and later hold a similar, expanded event to include Argentina and other countries. Chinaglia and the other Brazilian legislators highlighted Brazil's prowess with biofuels and success in reducing the rate of deforestation in recent years.

Meeting with Ministry of External Relations

¶4. Ministry of External Relations (MRE) Under Secretary for Political Affairs, Ambassador Everton Vargas, stressed the centrality of the principle "common, but differentiated responsibilities" in addressing global climate change. Vargas is a pivotal figure on Brazil's climate change negotiating team. While Brazil should not be expected to assume the obligations of developed countries, Vargas assured that it would try to do its part in the global effort. He noted the reduction in the rate of deforestation in recent years, and also the successful biofuels program. Vargas heard that some U.S. legislators might try to include in climate change legislation, such as the various cap-and-trade bills now in Congress, a link or pre-condition between U.S. actions and other countries - such as Brazil - assuming obligations. He strongly urged the CODEL to resist including such a link or pre-condition.

Meeting with Environment Ministry officials

¶5. Minister of the Environment Minister Marina Silva, her senior climate change adviser Thelma Krug, and her head of the recently created Brazilian Forest Service, Tasso Azevedo informed the Codel of the progress that had been made in recent years in reducing the rate of deforestation in the Amazon. Silva and Azevedo noted that in light of a jump in the rate in the last five months of 2007, the government was redoubling its efforts to increase monitoring and enforcement of the laws against deforestation. Silva said that they had arrested over 600 people last year, including about 100 corrupt government employees. Azevedo described improvements in monitoring of the forest through high-resolution satellites and also more frequent, low resolution satellites. He requested the delegation's help with acquiring the high-resolution satellite photos, which the Forest Service had limited resources to purchase. Azevedo also described a new forest concession system that his organization

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supervised.

Meeting with NGO representatives

¶6. The Codel met with representatives of various non-governmental organizations (NGOs), who generally painted a much bleaker picture of the situation in the Amazon. They thought the government had insufficient resources to monitor and enforce the laws in the Amazon. They stressed that what is needed were changes to the current economic patterns in the Amazon. Currently, little or no value is placed on standing forests. Dan Nepstad of Woods Hole, Paulo Moutinho of the Amazon Research Institute (IPAM), and Dan Zarin of the University of Florida opined on the need to put a value on the environmental services provided by a forest; John Carter of Alliance for the Earth underscored the lawlessness around his farm in the Amazon.

GLOBE Legislators Forum

¶7. The Codel represented the U.S. Congress at a meeting of the GLOBE International Legislators Forum on climate change, which met in Brasilia February 19-21. The Forum included representatives from the G-8 countries plus five (Brazil, China, India, South Africa, and Mexico). The GLOBE Forum considered various papers on climate change, forests, and biofuels. When finalized, these papers will be presented to the G-8 Gleneagles process. Chairman Markey made an intervention at the Forum; he highlighted the Congress's passage of the Clean Energy Act in 2007, which raised the mileage standards, and discussed various bills on climate change now in the U.S. Congress. He expressed his views on the direction the likely legislation to be enacted by the U.S. Congress in the next couple of years and on the probable approach the next administration would take with regard to climate change.

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